



Task 1. Stakeholder Interview Summary

Purpose of Stakeholder Interviews

As part of the issue identification phase of the US 89 corridor plan, a series of fourteen (14) stakeholder interviews were conducted in-person and by telephone in May and June, 2002. The purpose of the interviews was to gain local insight and experience with the current conditions and problems with US 89, from Montpelier to the Utah border. The number of multiple comments are noted. If not noted then only one stakeholder made the comment.

Stakeholders Interviews (completed)

1. Mayor T.D. Bird, City of Montpelier
2. Mayor Les Hill, City of St. Charles
3. Mayor David Matthews, City of Paris
4. Mayor Roy Bunderson, City of Bloomington
5. Commissioner Dwight Cochran, Bear Lake County
6. Commissioner Conrad Michaelson, Bear Lake County
7. Glay Homer, Bear Lake School District Superintendent
8. Wayne Keetch, Bear Lake School District Transportation Director
9. Craig Thomas, Bear Lake Regional Commission
10. Judy Holbrook, Bear Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau
11. Eulalie Langford, State Representative
12. Rod Jacobsen, Bear Lake Memorial Hospital
13. K.B. Rassmussen
14. Steve Allred, Zion Bank
15. Dennis Dueheren, US Forest Service District Ranger
16. Jim Mende, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
17. Dave Hull, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

Interview Results

Current Conditions

1. How would you describe the current condition or function of the highway in terms of meeting the major transportation needs of the community?
 - The highway is in good condition and is sufficient to meet the needs of the communities. (4 comments)
 - The highway functions reasonably well during the peak summer season.
 - The highway functions poorly. It is too narrow and should be four lanes wide.

- It is a major highway link between National Parks from Mexico to Canada. Increasing bus and RV traffic. Salt Lake City has an international airport and US 89 is the direct route to Yellowstone and Jackson.
2. Where are the current problems, such safety, congestion, pavement conditions, design (sharp curves, poor sight distance, narrow roadway), located? What are some of the possible solutions? Are there any constraints as far as what can be done(e.g. wetlands)?
- Summer congestion in Fish Haven is a tough problem. There may not enough space to increase the width of the roadway. Need to look at turn lanes and passing lanes. Designate Fish Haven as a no passing zone. (3 comments)
 - Fish Haven Canyon Road intersection has poor sight distance, especially when there are lots of cars parked at adjacent businesses.
 - There are too many driveways with access onto the highway in the Fish Haven area. Approaches are too steep for safe sight distances. Need to consolidate access points. (3 comments)
 - Bear Lake West beach access has no parking area.
 - A major realignment or bypass is needed in Fish Haven. The highway should be located up the hill and away from the lake so there is space to expand to four lanes.
 - The Ovid intersection is confusing to visitors from outside the area, especially eastbound traffic on Highway 36. Many people run the stop sign. Expansion of sawmill may create additional problems with trucks entering the highway. There used to be rumble strips on the approach to the stop sign. Realignment is necessary. (All)
 - Lanark Road intersection is a blind spot. (3 comments)
 - Ovid to Paris has problems with sight distances and ice and snow drifts. (4 comments)
 - Montpelier to Ovid has numerous access points to farm field, which can create problems with farm equipment entering and exiting the highway. Need wider travel lanes and wider shoulders.
 - North Beach Road and Minnetonka Cave intersection is a major cross highway route. 25,000 visitors to the cave each summer. People travel from National Forest campgrounds across US 89 to North Beach lake access. Poor sight distances. Speed limit is too high. Turning lanes are needed. (4 comments)
 - There are 17 bus stops in 65 mph speed limit areas. The highway is not designed as a 65 mph road. Bus pullouts will help, especially between Ovid and Paris.
 - US 89 improvements east of Montpelier are only a partial solution. The south slope and lower part of the highway need additional work beyond the current project.
 - Some of the bridges are narrow.
 - At some point, the highway will need a complete re-paving, not just patches.

3. What are some of the current problems for other types of users (e.g. peds/bikes, trucks, rail, airport, utilities)? What are some of the possible solutions?
- The Logan Canyon improvements will lead to increased truck traffic on US 89. (3 comments)
 - Bear Lake has a tourism based economy. A bike lane is needed in Fish Haven to link with the one in Garden City. (4 comments)
 - Farm equipment on highway. No longer will haul hay on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays.
 - Gravel pit truck access highway at Worm Creek Road.
 - School kids on highway waiting for pick-up in Fish Haven because local roads are too steep for school buses. School district has bus service in Montpelier and Paris to address safety concerns for students crossing highway.
 - Need better signage to identify access routes to National Forest to minimize trespassing.

Future Conditions

4. Looking 20 years into the future, will there be any significant changes in the role or function of the highway?
- Expect more second/vacation home development in the Fish Haven area. The number of homes could double over the next ten years. Only 10% of the lots are built out. (3 comments)
 - Growth will be focused on Fish Haven, not much change expected in other parts of the corridor.
 - Mostly summer season use, but expect increase in winter season use.
 - Expect increase in full-time residents in Fish Haven.
 - Bloomington is growing (20% over the last ten years).
5. Other than the proposed Bear Haven development, are there other potential major developments or land use changes that would change the travel patterns along the highway?
- The airport has some potential. There is grant funding to upgrade the canal bridge to improve access to Paris.
 - Potential for convention facility.
 - Increasing vacation home development on eastside of lake.
 - Fiber optic cable runs from Montpelier to Paris. Potential for software development or customer service.

6. Where do you think future problems will occur along US 89? What are the possible solutions and constraints?
- Fish Haven congestion will get worse.
 - Need scenic overlooks and pullouts along Bear Lake. (3 comments)
 - Need more parking for lake access.
 - Need more parking for snowmobiles during winter season.
 - Road improvements between Dingle and Hot Springs would provide an alternate route to Montpelier for residents on the east side of the lake. It could also serve as an alternative route during major construction projects.
 - More conflicts between local traffic and through traffic. Need more passing lanes. Limit driveway access to highway, use side streets within small cities and towns.
7. What do you think some of the problems for other users in the future might be? What are the possible solutions and constraints?
- Old Ping-Pong rail line from Montpelier to Paris could be converted to bike trail to provide access to marsh lands.
 - Increasing snow mobile popularity increases winter season use.
 - More long-haul bicyclists from Logan to Jackson. Need wider lanes and shoulders along entire corridor, not just Fish Haven.
8. Are there any specific goals for the corridor that you would like to see used as a guide for the study?
- Safety is a primary concern.
 - Efficient truck flow.
 - Balance between interstate commerce and tourism recreation users.
9. Are there any specific policies for management of the corridor that you would like to see changed or adopted (e.g. access management)?
- Bear Lake County and other local governments have a good relationship with ITD, which is doing a good job in managing the highway and securing funding for improvement projects.
 - ITD does a good job with snow removal and road maintenance. (2 comments)

Community and Environmental Issues

10. In the communities along the highway, are there areas that are adversely impacted by the highway? What kind of impacts?

- New speed limits are okay. No complaints from the local community. (3 comments)
- New speed limits need better transition to communities with lower speed limit buffers.
- Need slower speed limits in the Fish Haven area.
- Bypass is not needed, traffic is important to businesses.
- Need to construct planned landscaping in Montpelier to re-connect the community. Need to maintain crosswalks and turn lanes.

11. Are there environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, stream crossings, migration routes, that are impacted by the highway?

- Montpelier to Ovid – no shoulders, wetlands on either side.
- Water quality and stormwater runoff issues, especially with winter maintenance practices.
- Big game migration routes make winter crossings along highway.
- St. Charles sewer lagoons are located adjacent to highway.
- St. Charles Creek has fish spawning habitat. Springs along highway feed big reach of St. Charles Creek.

Corridor Planning Process

12. Would you be interested in serving on the Task Force/TAC?

13. Can you recommend other people who we should interview or would be interested in participating on the Task Force/TAC?

- Rod Jacobsen, Bear Lake Hospital
- Ron Jensen, Fish Haven planning and zoning issues.

14. Where are the best places to hold public meetings?

- Paris Elementary School
- Oregon Trail Center
- Montpelier City Hall
- LDS Church in St. Charles
- County Fairgrounds – Allred Center

15. What is the best way to let people know about the planning process?

- The News Examiner for local issues.
- Bear Laker Magazine for tourists.
- Idaho State Journal – some people read it.
- KVSI radio – Keith Martindale’s “Voice of the Valley” program is widely listened to each morning.
- Chamber of Commerce newsletter.
- Post Offices for posting meeting announcements.
- Bear Lake Regional Commission email list.